

Multicultural Recruitment: A Case on Hmong Female College-Bound Students

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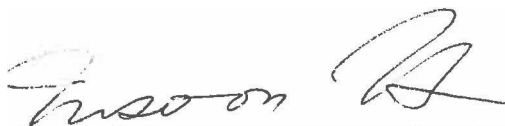
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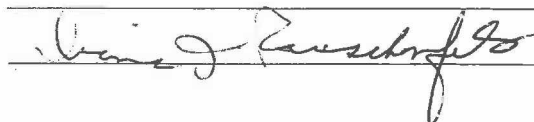
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## **Acknowledgements**

I would like to thank my Adviser Insoon Han and the faculty of the Master of Education Program at the University of Minnesota, Duluth for their commitment to excellence and development of the program and students.

## **Dedication**

This thesis is dedicated to my supportive wife Sally Thao Her and family that have stood by my side throughout my education. I would also like to dedicate this to my Hmong students at the University of Minnesota, Morris who has unknowingly been a source of motivation for me.

## **Abstract**

This study is a mixed method research looking at Hmong Women and their pursuit of higher education. It is a norm in the Hmong culture for women to have less privilege than men which leads to less freedom and more household chores. Studies have been done by other researchers in the 1990's and found these cultural norms as barriers to higher education among Hmong women. This study looks at the barriers to see if it limits women's opportunities to pursue a college degree but will also compare if there are differences between Hmong men and women. The hypothesis is that distance away from home may be an issue among the Hmong population when choosing a college for their daughters. Data will be collected by surveying Hmong college students in Minnesota and Wisconsin as well as interviewing Hmong college students, parents, and educators. Suggestions for future research will be to focus on men's pursuit of higher education.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### Introduction

#### **1.1 Introduction**

The Hmong have only immigrated to the United States for 37 years, but they have proven to be progressive learners and productive members of American society. Much growth has been made by both men and women in the field of education; however, there needs to be more research in the subject of Hmong women and their pursuit of higher education. Researchers such as Stacey Lee from the University of Wisconsin, Madison have looked at this topic in the 1990's and found out that Hmong women face many adversities on their way to attaining a college degree. These include having to overcome gender roles, community pushback against educated Hmong women, and early pregnancy leading to marriage.

Since then, other educators have researched and found a significant increase from this population that is getting educated and some of the said barriers no longer exist. In fact, the 2010 census suggests that Hmong women are attending and graduating from college at almost the same rate as their male counterpart. Even though that is the case, there may be a phenomenon that exists which this research will attempt to verify. Both Hmong men and women are equally encouraged to attend college; however, women are encouraged to stay closer to home.

#### **1.2 Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this study was to explore the pursuit and barriers to higher education among female Hmong students compared to Hmong men. This study focused on examining the relationship between culture and education, the opportunities to

pursue a higher education between male and female, as well as the distance away from home that male and female are choosing to go for college. The research design was a mixed methods in which quantitative data were gathered using a survey and qualitative data were collected from personal interviews. Research participants were primarily college students in Minnesota and Wisconsin for both survey and interview, along with a few parents and Hmong education professionals in the interview.

### **1.3 Research Question**

The central question that guide this research pertains to what barriers do Hmong women face in pursuing a higher education compared to Hmong men.

- How do these differences or similarities in adversities lead to Hmong women making their final decision about college in regards to the distance away from home?
- How do culture, gender roles, time in the United States and community factor into this decision?

These themes were the focus of the research to test author's hypothesis that distance is an issue for Hmong women when making the decision on a college.

### **1.4 Background**

The Hmong worked with the United States during the Vietnam War by rescuing downed American pilots and disrupting the Ho Chi Minh trail in Laos. After the war ended and the United States withdrew from Vietnam, the Hmong experienced retaliation and were "targets of genocide" from the North Vietnamese and Lao



Communists for their partnership with the United States (Tatman, 2004). As early as 1975, America began accepting Hmong immigrants and settling them in pockets which include California, Massachusetts, Texas, Minnesota and Wisconsin. Like many newly arrived immigrants, the Hmong faced hardships such as language barriers, cultural shocks and finding work. This is especially tough for women who not only have to face this new world but maintain their roles within the family and community. Transition to western culture, where many women work outside the home, has placed a tremendous burden on young mothers who are attempting to fill several roles, that of an obedient wife, daughter, daughter-in-law, mother and wage earner (Lao Family Community of Minnesota, Inc. 1997).

Gender roles play a huge part in the Hmong culture. Women have traditionally been at home cleaning, cooking, and raising the children while the men do the heavy labor, get involved in the political and social transactions and serve as the head of the household as well as the primary income earner. In a traditional Hmong house setting, the mother tends to her young children, while the father is in charge of taking care of the clan business (Yang, 2011).

When the Hmong came to the United States it became apparent that having two incomes leads to a better life; however, income is often tied to the level of education that one receives. This poses a challenge to the women due to the fact that family lineage and heritage have always been passed through males; thus, the Hmong are still more willing to make educational and financial investments in their sons (Lo, 2002). This created friction between women and their roles because it is not traditional for women to get educated. Due to these roles and cultural values, it was hard for

institutions of higher education to recruit this population of young Hmong women in the past.

Hmong women and their pursuit of higher education have been studied before in the early 1990's. Stacey Lee (2001), a Chinese American researcher has spent a significant amount of time learning and researching this phenomena and her work has found its way into many other research papers including this one. The biggest difference between some of her work and this particular research is the setting of time and space. While other studies have focused primarily just on women and their barriers, this research attempts to bridge the relationship between education and culture by reaching out to college Hmong students, their parents, and Hmong education professionals.

### **1.5 Assumptions**

Similar research has been done in the past regarding Hmong women's pursuit of a college degree; therefore, the researcher assumes that some of the results from this study fall in line with previous studies. Gender roles are expected to play a part in how the Hmong female students respond to their college search process. Family structures should contribute to the decision of which strategy that college representatives apply in recruiting Hmong female students. Knowing that the Hmong make decisions as a family and that the father usually has the final say, the researcher assumes that many of the subjects will refer to their family when answering some of the questions on the survey or interview.

Another assumption was that although these students may be pioneers in their respective families to pursue a college education, they are not the first ones to have to

break through the many barriers. Because of the fact that other female Hmong students have attended and have been successful college graduates, the researcher assumes that some of the barriers of the past would no longer exist. Such barriers include the community push back factor that others have to go through in the late 1980's to the 1990's. It is assumed that these families already know the value of a higher education and how that ties to economic outcomes of the individuals. Another assumption is some of these students may have families who are not first generation students and have been in the states for a long time. Their transition to American life is not as difficult as those who have to go through this process decades ago; thus, eliminating some of the cultural barriers.

### **1.6 Limitations**

The main limitation to this research is that the participants are from urban areas of Minnesota or Wisconsin. Minneapolis and Saint Paul from which most participants were sampled have the densest concentration of Hmong in the United States, but the participants may not be representative of the whole Hmong population across the United States due to different cultures across geological locations. For example, considering this area is a large urban environment, issues related to large urban areas such as poverty, gang activities, and crimes might not be the concern for other Hmong who live in other geological areas.

Another limitation is the fact that the researcher is male and there might be a rapport with the female students and or their parents. In other words, the gender gap may lead to biases between the researcher and the participants.

### **1.7 Definition of Terms**

**Hmong:** An Asian ethnic group from the mountainous regions of China, Vietnam, Laos and Thailand. In China, they are referred to as Miao, a term used to define the subgroups of minorities in southern China.

**Gender Role:** Set of social norms that are considered appropriate for individuals of a specific sex in the context of a specific culture.

**Culture:** The behaviors and beliefs characteristic of a particular social, ethnic, or age group.

**Tradition:** The body of customs, thought, practices, etc. belonging to a particular country, people, family, or institution over a relatively long time.

**Cultural Competence:** The process by which individuals and systems respond respectfully and effectively to people of all cultures, languages, classes, races, ethnic backgrounds, religions, and other diversity factors in a manner that recognizes, affirms, and values the worth of individuals, families, and communities and protects and preserves dignity of each (National Association of Social Workers, 2001).

**First Generation Immigrant:** A foreign born citizen or legal resident of a country who emigrated from another country.

**Second Generation Immigrant:** The second generation of a family to inhabit, but the first to be naturally born in a country.

**First Generation College Student:** First generation college students are those students whose parents have not attained a college degree. These students may enter a college or university with limited knowledge about the jargon, traditions, and patterns or expected behavior because they might have little or no family collegiate history.

**Second Generation College Student:** College students where one or both parents have attained a college degree, but grandparents or earlier generation have not attained a college degree.

### **1.8 Summary**

The purpose of this research was to explore the barriers that Hmong female students have to face in their pursuit of higher education and to see if these obstacles are similar or different to what they were a decade ago. Because the Hmong are relatively new in America with a third wave arriving as recently as 2003 to the present, the researcher wants to explore the struggles that these new female students face in comparison to the struggles that others have faced in the late 1980's and early 1990's. The researcher believes that some of the same barriers such as community pushback are no longer in existent; however, where Hmong women choose to go to college might still be an issue. The next chapter of this paper is a literature review of previous research that explores why it is important to recruit students of color into college and specifically Hmong women's pursuit of higher education.

## CHAPTER TWO

### Literature Review

#### 2.1 Introduction

It has been 37 years since the December of 1975 when the United States began accepting Hmong refugees; the Hmong have shown perseverance, motivation, and the ability to adapt to a new culture as they always had. Many are now business owners, doctors, lawyers, physicians, nurses, educators and professionals in almost every field. The key component is that they have progressed far educationally. In fact, in 2001, researcher Kou Yang suggests that as of 1999, Hmong Americans have approximately 120 individuals who have already completed their doctoral studies and these include the study of law, pharmacy, medicine, and other professional degrees.

One phenomenon that exists is Hmong women's pursuit of higher education. Of the 120 Hmong Doctorates that Yang mentioned, only about one third of those are women (Yang, 2001). This discrepancy is due to many reasons including early marriage, child care, community pressures and gender roles. Because of these social issues, even when Hmong women go to college, many are encouraged to stay locally so that they can continue to support their parents.

This literature review examines why it is important to recruit multiethnic students of color into higher education, and explore Hmong women's pursuit of and barriers to higher education. It first reviews the history of minorities in education and establishes why it is important to recruit different populations using different strategies. In addition, it covers history of the Hmong in the United States, their academic achievements, and the obstacles they have overcome, and challenges that they face such

as the model minority myth. The focus then is on the barriers that have historically kept Hmong women from pursuing higher education and provide strategies on how to help them overcome these barriers. It concludes with how the same concepts can apply to other new immigrant populations or other populations of minorities.

## **2.2 Multicultural Recruitment**

### **2.2.1 Validity of Multicultural Recruitment**

Times are changing and so are the demographics of the population. The academic achievement gap continues to increase between the dominant population and minorities, thus pressuring institutions of higher education to exercise leadership in addressing the problem of minority education before it reaches critical proportions (Astane & Wormak, 1990). For example, the National Center for Education Statistics (2010) reported that between 1975 and 2010, the percentage of 25 – 29 year-olds who have completed a bachelor degree or higher increased only from 10% – 19% for Blacks, 9% – 13% for Hispanics, compared to 22% – 32% for Whites.

Historically, the educational system has favored the white man and hidden agendas have proceeded to perpetuate these biases. On the higher educational level it starts even before students are enrolled. In their article “From Freshman to Graduate: Recruiting and Retaining Minority Students”, Lisa D. Hobson-Horton and Lula Owens said that “Concerning recruitment, White colleges are recruiting and contacting White males at higher rates than other groups” (Hobson-Horton & Owens, 2004, p. 88). Recently, colleges have increased the diversification efforts and have been intentional about recruiting students of color into their respective institutions. They realize that an

initiative to recruit minority students will affect, and be affected by, institutional concerns from curriculum to campus life (Astone & Nenez-Wormack, 1990).

Diversity in education begins with initiatives from the highest level of authority. A recruitment plan must be intentional and strategic so that a different route can be taken depending upon which population is targeted. Diversifying and recruiting students of color will not be successful without the diversification of the faculty and staff as well. The American Federations of Teachers (2010) suggests that there has not been a significant movement towards diversification despite strong support for diversity across the nation. This is another issue that needs to be looked at because if higher educational institutions want to truly be dedicated to have a diverse student body, their faculty and staff needs to reflect that as well.

One of the biggest problems with recruiting students of color is that college professionals sometimes lack the ability or knowledge to work with these students. It seems that because people of color share the same challenges, struggles and common concern, they often get referred to as a single group. In fact, however, this population of African Americans, Hispanics, Asian Americans, and American Indians comprise a large variety of people from different racial, ethnic, language, and cultural backgrounds (Astone and Nenez-Wormack, 1990). Because of this, smaller colleges and or universities that do not have funding designate only one position for the recruitment of students of color when in fact it should be a whole group effort.

Simply being a minority does not entail that this one person can relate to all populations of color. Sending a Black person into a primarily Asian area to recruit is no different than sending a Hispanic, or Caucasian. It takes someone who is competent in



that culture to be able to gain the trust, to be able to relate to that specific group and often times it is someone who is the same race of the targeted population. Specifically for the Hmong, it is much harder for any recruiter because the Hmong are fairly new in the country and are only starting to prove themselves as a great prospect among colleges and universities.

### 2.2.2 Hmong and the Model Minority Myth

Based on the idea of the Model Minority Myth, Asian Americans are academically and economically successful because they work hard and follow cultural norms that typically emphasize the importance of education. Despite the growth of Asians in America and the diversity of these populations, many educators and educational policymakers know little about these students and often rely on the stereotypes that Asian American students are “model minorities” (Lee, 2001). Thus they were depicted as quiet, independent, math and science inclined, and computer geniuses.

This puts tremendous pressures on these students to perform well in these respective subjects and if they don’t or if they were too outspoken, they weren’t Asian enough. Statistics seems to show that Asians score extremely high on tests; this is not the case with the Hmong population and in fact Hmong students tend to test at the national average or below on scores such as the ACT. The 2010 census shows that the average ACT score of a Hmong student is 17.1, well below the national average.

Statistics also show that Asians in the U.S. are equal to Caucasian when it comes to financial levels; however, the socioeconomic status of many Asian sub-populations actually varies enormously; Southeast Asians, the third largest group averaged fifty

percent living at poverty level in 1980 (Asone & Nenez-Wormack, 1990). In 1995, the poverty rate of the Hmong was highest in the nation at 60%; by 2005 that figure was reduced to 30%. The 2010 Census shows the Hmong poverty level to be 14.4%, higher than the national average of 12 percent. Although cut more than half, that is one of the higher poverty rate among populations in America.

Another piece of the myth that makes bad assumptions about Asians is that they chose to come here for financial opportunities and jobs. Although that is the case with many Chinese, Japanese, Korean and other Asians, it is not the case with the Hmong. They did not choose to come to the country and where they came from, in farming villages, they didn't always put emphasis on education like the other Asian ethnicities listed above. Many of these other Asians who came by choice to look for jobs or go to school already has the means to or has families who has the means to send them here. They came from communities that put high values on education; therefore they are bound to excel academically and financially. To compare the Hmong and other Southeast Asians like the Laos and Cambodians to these more privileged Asian races is unfair and puts pressure on them to do well or be considered failures.

Furthermore, Hmong parents lacked the social capital that would allow them to negotiate the system. They don't have social networks that can provide necessary information regarding the school systems and how to advocate for their children (Lee, 2001). Because of this, parents don't know how to navigate the choice-based system in which students choose their own classes. With this lack of knowledge about making educational choices to picking classes, many Hmong high school students don't know

how to choose the “right classes” that will set them on track for 4-year colleges and universities.

### **2.3 History of Hmong Migration to the United States**

“The term “Hmong” refers to an Asian ethnic group who call themselves “Hmong”, but who are labeled by outsiders as “Miao” in China and “Meo” in Thailand.” (Yang, 2001, p. 165) It is said that the Hmong originated in northern China approximated 4,000 years ago, eventually moving south and west into the highlands, where geographical isolation heightened their linguistic and cultural distinctiveness (Trueba, Jacobs, & Kirton, 1990). After a mighty war in which they lost to the Chinese, most of the Hmong who were not assimilated into Chinese culture were driven down into what was the Indochina area which now consists of Vietnam, Laos, Burma, Thailand and Cambodia.

Hmong people coming to the United States are a direct result of the Vietnam War. Most Americans would not know that there were really two wars being fought during that time, the Vietnam front and Laotian front. The United States CIA recruited the Hmong to fight for them knowing the Hmong’s history as fierce, determined and resourceful warriors. The Hmong were promised power, land and control if they won and protection otherwise.

America pulled out of the war in 1975 and many of the Hmong population were left to fend for themselves in the jungles of Laos. Without resources and proper gear, they had no chance against the communist Pathet Lao army. The war and journey to freedom in Thailand took its toll on the Hmong population, killing up to ten percent of the total Hmong people. Starting in 1976, the United States began accepting Hmong

refugees who had assisted the CIA in Laos (Swartz, Lee & Mortimer, 2003). They were settled all over the US; however, being a people that naturally mass together, eventually found homes in California, Wisconsin and Minnesota. In fact, the Twin Cities and its surrounding suburbs are home to over 66 thousand Hmong.

## **2.4 Hmong in Education**

### **2.4.1 Educational Struggles of Hmong Students**

Historically, the Hmong have been a nomadic people that have never had a country of their own; thus, they have developed the ability to adapt to their environment. In just 35 years in the United States, they have progressed dramatically financially and educationally. This progression however did not happen overnight; it took hard work and determination and beating the odds to achieve what they did. According to 2000 Census data, 59.6% of Hmong American adults over 25 have less than a high school education and only 7.5% of Hmong American adults over 25 have earned bachelor's degrees. Based on the 2010 Census, only 14.7% of Hmong adults over the age of 25 have less than a high school diploma and 17.6% have a bachelor's degree while 10.4% have attained a graduate or professional degree. This significant improvement speaks volume of the Hmong's ability to adapt to a culture that places such a high value on education.

Like many newly arrived immigrants, language barriers, culture shock, poverty and other social issues factor into the educational progression of the Hmong. One of the leading challenges to education is the language and according to Vang and Flores (2000), most of the Hmong children are school age when they entered the United States. The fact that these students don't understand English combined with other culture

struggles, it is impossible to expect immediate success from anyone in such situation. Due to lack of education from parents at home, it is hard to provide additional support for these students, which leads to frustration for both families and teachers. “Most U.S. Hmong parents are concerned about their children’s education, but many of them are refugee who have not had any formal education and lack the educational background to provide necessary support at home” (Vang, 2004, p. 4). Because of this lack of education, many Hmong parents feel like they are at a constant disadvantage. “It is extremely difficult to work with Hmong youth when their families feel powerless” (Vang and Flores, 2000, p. 12).

This challenge isn’t enough to deter them from success because Hmong students have concluded that money equals power in the U.S. and many Hmong students have internalized a sense of shame about their class backgrounds (Lee, 2001). This extra motivation fuels the drive for many Hmong families to press their sons and daughters to success in the class room. The Hmong family’s dedication to education is an attitude that has positive implications for children (Vang & Flore, 2000). Due to this push, “Hmong high school students reported a grade point average of 3.05 during their senior year, which was significantly higher than the non-Hmong reported grade point average of 2.77” (Swartz, Lee & Mortimer, 2003 p. 17).

#### 2.4.2 Hmong Women in Education: Gender Roles

As the Hmong begin to rise up in the educational rank, unsurprisingly the Hmong women lag behind. Success stories like former State Senator Mee Moua were encouraged by parents and uncles to do well academically, thus driving her to graduate from Brown University and then go to law school. This is not always the case because

despite the claims Hmong girls and boys report that their parents warn them that if they fail to get a high school education, they will be a bum (Lee, 2001), Hmong girls were still not expected to do well in school. Hmong girls experience particularly serious problems in school during the early years of resettlement (Lee, 2001). Factors like gender roles and the pressure to marry early are the most common road blocks to Hmong women's pursuit of higher education. On average, 50% of women who married as teenagers reported obtaining only a high school education or less while 80% of women who married in their 20's had completed higher than a high school degree.

Often times parenting has much to do with the support that students get at home and this especially holds true for the girls. On top of school work, they have chores, babysitting and cooking responsibilities that take up much of their time that could have been spent on homework. While the girls are to remain home and do chores, boys often get the chance to stay after school and get the help needed. This is not uncommon because in the U.S., many Hmong women are still not expected to be economic producers for the family. They remain close to the home to provide childcare and domestic support (Vang, 2004).

Because of the fact that they are female, aspects of the students' lives are very restricted (Ngo, 2002). The Hmong are a patriarchal society in which the head of the household is a man, usually the father. Because of this, men are often expected to uphold the traditions and values of the family and clan, and Hmong women are to provide unconditional support for their men in turn (Lee, 1994). Usually the man of the house makes decisions and the rest of the family has to abide by them. This has a huge impact on where the daughters can go to school, thus limiting the educational options

that they may or may not have. Because of the traditional roles expected of women, research shows that women are less likely to be assertive in interactions with men because of the traditional roles expected of them (Yang, 2004). They will typically have to live with whatever decision the family makes whether they like it or not.

Even the chores at home are different by gender. Essentially the boys don't have much to do here in America. Back in the old country where manual labor is needed, the boys do the heavy lifting such as chopping wood for the stove; however, these chores are no longer needed so the boys get the evenings to themselves for the most part. They can go out with friends, play sports, and find other activities to refresh from school while girls have to come home. "At the age of 5, I began cooking rice and washing dishes for my family. In keeping the traditional Hmong culture, my five brothers had no chores" (Vue, 2009, p. 1)

#### 2.4.3 Women in Education: Early Marriage

Early marriage has a huge impact on educational interest and pursuit among Hmong women. "Over 50% of women who waited to marry in their twenties were able to obtain a four year degree while only one third of women who married as teenagers obtained a college degree. "All women who earned a post-Master's degree, except one outlier, were either single or waited until their 20's to marry" (Vang, 2009, p. 2). The question that many researchers want to know is why do women marry at such an early age? There are many different answers but it all usually comes down to community pressure and expected gender roles.

In order to truly understand how community plays a role, one must first understand how the Hmong community works. In America, one is taught to take care

of oneself first. Family comes next in the order of importance, and then if there is time and resources, the community. In the Hmong culture, it is the exact opposite; one is taught to serve the community first, family and then self. Due to this model of service, everyone wants to look their best and do their best to look good in the eyes of the community. For girls, that means knowing how to cook, clean, and babysit. They are not encouraged to go out and if they do they are considered as “bad girls”. To instill fear and gain control over their daughters, parents threatened and often follow through with forced marriage. To keep the family name from disgrace and “save face”, parents will often force a man to marry a woman if he takes her out for too long or overnight because she is considered soiled after such an event regardless of what really happened.

Stacey Lee (2001) puts into perspective the dominance that girls go through as teenagers in her article, “Exploring and Transforming the Landscape of Gender and Sexuality: Hmong American Teenaged Girls”. “Sneaking around behind their parent’s backs, however, is not without risks. For a girl who has been sexually active, marriage is often seen as the only viable option and threat of marriage is used as a form of control” (Lee, 2001, p. 4)

Girls are pressured to marry early and start a family and have kids. By doing this, they fall right into the descriptions of gender roles. If Hmong American girls drop out of school to get married and have children, or if few Hmong American women pursue higher education, the reasons lie entirely within the Hmong community (Lee, 1997). Another trend also contributes to women marrying early and that is most Hmong men marry a younger wife. Even an educated man seems to prefer teenage wives whom they can dominate and control because as Stacey Lee mentioned in her



research, “several informants say they believe that most Hmong men view college-educated women as being too assertive and that they purposely choose young wives they can boss around (Lee, 1997, p. 820).

This preference for younger women strikes fear in the heart of women, even those who choose to post-pone marriage despite the risk. They fear that someday they would be “too old” for anyone man to want as a bride. Thus, some women drop out of college to get married, or marry during college. Usually when a woman marries a man, she has to go live with the man and that could mean leaving college. Other barriers arise too because she now has responsibilities to cook, clean and raise children if they decide to have any.

Community pressure isn’t the only thing that causes young Hmong women to marry early. Being Hmong and following traditions can be a fallback if the route they choose is not enjoyable. In her article “Contesting “Culture”: The Perspectives of Hmong American Female Students on Early Marriage, Ngo (2002), mentioned a student Tia, who was marginalized at her institution of choice, Hills College. In her alienation from the campus community, she began to view marriage an option to escape her miserable college experience. Tia eventually follows through and married in hopes that marriage would allow her to familiarize and accept the Hmong community and culture. Ngo concluded that for Tia, dropping out of school to get married was a way to leave and reject the norms and practices of an educational institution that excluded her.

One of the other big pieces that contribute to early marriage among Hmong women is defiance. For some American girls, the main reason to marry early and leave the pursuit of education is to gain independence from their parents. They don’t view

this as a real desire to follow tradition (Ngo, 2002). In response to being controlled, many girls married to get out of the dominating environment of their home. Often times they would purposely stay out late so that they would have no choice but to marry. Those who marry early assume that marriage will allow them to escape parental control and have freedom (Lee, 2001).

Little did these young women know that they were merely escaping one form of control for another. Most young married Hmong couples live with the husband's family and the girl now comes under the control of her in-laws (Ngo, 2002). Education takes a huge hit even when they try to further it because as Ngo also points out, for those who choose both, there are even greater barriers to overcome. A student has to deal with childcare, assisting their mother-in-laws with household chores and often times bills. One of the biggest barriers is the worry that their in-laws would think they were cheating on their husbands when they study late or work in group projects. They often times get accused of indecency.

## **2.5 Overcoming Barriers**

### **2.5.1 Progress and Upward Trends**

Although Hmong women have tremendous obstacles to overcome, many have achieved success such as Mee Moua, who became the first Hmong to sit among the ranks of Minnesota's State Senators. Financial reason is the common denominator for women to pursue education. Parents and families realize that economic improvement is often tied to education. Public assistance and low-paying jobs are often the only options available for parents; hence, memories of their parents financial hardship motivates these young women to persist in school (Lee, 1997). There is also progress

even among those who did married early. “The majority of Hmong females who have married in high school graduated along with the rest of their class, whereas the non-Hmong females who were married typically did not graduate on time” (Swartz, Lee & Mortimor, 2003, p. 20).

Motives to further their education lie not only in financial gains, but to gain more independence. In Stacey Lee’s (2001) article, she mentions a Hmong women pioneer, Joua, who is looked up to as a leader in the Hmong community and serves as a role model and catalyst for change. Joua is thirty-three years old at the time of the research, educated and has never been married, breaking all the rules in the book. She and other pioneers open up the doors for generations of younger girls to pursue a college degree. Many younger women are now growing up with the dream that they will at least be equal economic partners in marriage and not have to depend on the husband for everything. They also believe that education will open up the doors for their voices to be heard and opinions to be taken seriously by the community. Based on this recent surge, the results have already shown that Hmong women are better at school and more assertive than Hmong men. In part this has to do with the fact that they have something to prove, and are tired of being oppressed.

#### 2.5.2 Higher Education Roles in Overcoming Barriers

Multicultural recruitment has to be intentional to be successful. The same holds true in Hmong community and specifically Hmong girls. This is especially true when the Hmong are such a promising population when it comes to average age. “Among all Asian groups in America, the Hmong represents the youngest population per capita, with an average age of about 13, and also those with the largest family size of 6.6

persons” (Yang, 2001, p. 166). According to the 2010 Census, 24.2% of the Hmong population is still under the age of 25. This shows that there will be a large number of prospective students for colleges and with the contribution of recent influx of immigrants such as the Hmong to racial composition issues, educational disadvantaged ethnic minorities need to be closely monitored (Lee & Madyun, 2008).

There is still much work that needs to be done. The recent wave of Hmong immigrants brings with them the same issues that have been faced by earlier waves and it will take time for them to adjust and progress. Institutions of higher education need to know how to work with these new immigrants and how to gain the trust of the communities, parents and students to successfully recruit them.

#### 2.5.3 Gaining Trust of the Hmong Population

Trust is a huge issue among new immigrants; therefore understanding reasons why immigrants are in your community and their vision for maintaining their culture is the first step to develop partnerships (Allen, Matthew, & Boland, 2004). If an institution of higher education wants to gain the trust of the Hmong community, they would need to be prominent in the community and show that they are committed to providing opportunities for the people. A good example is the Center for Hmong Studies at Concordia University in Saint Paul, one of a few in the world. Other useful tips is to simply employ Hmong professionals in the field of education because these individuals will know best when it comes to strategic recruitment plans and how to best reach out to the community. They can also be a source of cultural competence to educate the institution.

Trust is big when it comes to working with Hmong women. In order to be able to gain their trust, one must be able to relate to them and show that perhaps there are things in common. Thus, at the high school level, when teachers condemn girls for early marriage, they may inadvertently be turning these students away from school. These girls won't trust and confide in teachers or staff who cannot understand their cultural beliefs. "Upon meeting me, the women immediately recognized that I was not a Hmong woman (i.e., not one of them), but they were interested in whether or not we shared cultural similarities" (Lee, 1997, p. 6). Stacey Lee, the researcher, found that the Hmong women whom she is interviewing as part of her research warmed up to her upon learning of similar cultural customs. Stacey found with another group of students that by keeping their secrets and sharing her Chinese heritage, she was able to gain their trust; however, they remained cautious in new situations (Lee, 2001). What this research shows is that if institutions of higher education are serious about recruiting this population, they need to employ someone with the knowledge and skill to relate to these students.

Once institutions are able to show that they have the support to sustain this population, they need to begin the recruitment process. Part of that has to do with recruiting the whole family, especially the parents. As mentioned, decisions are typically made by the father so if he is not sold, the daughter might not get to go to her college of choice. This is especially true if the college is several hours away where the parents will not be able to depend on their daughters for chores, but most importantly, control her. They fear that daughters will sleep around, go out and drink, or lose tradition. It is tough to convince parents on the concept of allowing their daughters to

go far away for school because of this and some will never be convinced. What always helps is to bring the parents and family onto campus to tour the facilities and see what is available; however, due to the fact that many of these parents work, they cannot and often will not go on college tours. The concept that parents have to understand is that if a girl wants to be a “bad girl”, she probably will do it right under their noses. If they can be convinced of trusting their daughters, a whole world of opportunities can be opened up to both institutions and the student.

## **2.6 Weakness in Current Research Methodology**

Many researches about Hmong women and their education quest that are available are older and dated in the 1990’s, while the Hmong community has been changing rapidly. Therefore the weakness of these previous studies has to do with the idea that their results might no longer apply to today’s Hmong population. Another weakness could be that a lot of the research that has been done has typically been qualitative research in which subjects were taken based on availability. Quantitative or a mixed methods will offer unique opportunity to contribute to our understanding of this topic.

## **2.7 Conclusion**

It has been established that multicultural recruitment is important because of the demographic changes in which the minority may become the majority. It is especially important because even though the demographics are changing, the academic achievement gap is increasing instead of closing; hence it is not reflective of the demographics. To help close this gap, recruitment plans for higher education institutions need to be intentional and strategic.

The Hmong have only been in the country for 37 years and have proven to be progressive learners, and productive members of American society; however, more work still needs to be done in order to break down other barriers such as women equality among other things. Even though big strides have been made by Hmong women pioneers in the direction of higher education, there is a need for more work and research on this particular topic. Institutions of higher education that want to recruit this population will need to look into the research of how to reach out to gain the trust of this community, the parents of these students and the students themselves to be of any success.

This literature review has been about the history, educational progress, and gender roles of the Hmong people, specifically Hmong women and their barriers to education. Significant time has passed since some of the studies were conducted; therefore the author theorizes that some of these barriers have changed. The next chapter describes the methods which the author employs to test his theory.

## CHAPTER THREE

### Methodology

#### **3.1 Introduction**

Hmong women have progressively improved their education, but their journey has not been easy. They overcame obstacles such as community pushback, gender roles, early pregnancy, and early marriage; however, a theory is that compared to Hmong males, distance may still be an issue for Hmong female college students when deciding where to go to college. This chapter will outline the research methodology that the author employs to prove or disprove this theory. It will begin by introducing the research procedure, ethics of the research, precautions to ensure the safety and confidentiality of the research participants, setting, participants, and how data was gathered and analyzed.

#### **3.2 Research Procedure**

This research is a mixed method approach using both qualitative and quantitative methods. The quantitative component is in the form of a survey in which the target population, in this case Hmong college students, take online. Participants are targeted through email with links to the survey where they can opt in to take it. At the end of the survey is a question asking if the participant is interested in a follow up interview. The qualitative research component is a series of interviews with Hmong college students, Hmong parents who have a son or daughter that is currently in college or have attended college, and Hmong education professionals. These participants are chosen based on availability and interest; the interviews are recorded for further



analysis using a recording device. Interviews take place on college campus, home of the participants, and through Skype.

### **3.3 Ethics**

The first step before research can take place is for the researcher to complete the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) module for research. The researcher must be well versed in the ethical issues and rights of the human subjects, the informed consent process and the rights of the researcher. Ethical training is done through the University of Minnesota, Duluth's department of education and permission was granted by the University of Minnesota's Institutional Review Board prior to the research. Data are reported as it is without modification from the author.

Creswell (2009) suggests that one issue to anticipate about confidentiality is that some participants may not want to have their identity remain confidential. By permitting this, the researcher allows the participants to retain ownership of their voices and exert their independence in making decisions. Privacy and confidential information are of most importance and the researcher takes extreme precautions to ensure that the participants are protected. Consent forms have to be filled out prior to interviews and the researcher makes sure that the participants know they can stop anytime should they become uncomfortable. If needed, pseudonyms will be made to protect the identity of the subjects.

The risk is minimal for both researcher and participants. It includes talking about the Hmong culture and aspects of it which the participants may not agree with. The risk in presenting materials will be talking about the Hmong culture and how it is a historically male dominated society. Most participants understand this, but may

disagree about certain aspects of it. The benefit of this research is that society will see, understand, and use this knowledge to help Hmong women to overcome barriers to higher education.

### **3.4 Participants and Setting**

Participants in this research have to be Hmong and over the age of 18. They are a combination of Hmong college students, parents, and educators and are targeted based on availability. Hmong organizations at various institutions including but not limited to the University of Minnesota-Morris, University of Minnesota-Twin Cities, Century College, Minneapolis Community and Technical College, St Catherine University and University of Wisconsin Stout are contacted via email with a request to participate in the research. To ensure a diverse group, participants are contacted from 4-year, 2-year, public and private institutions.

With their permission an email is sent with a link to the survey to advisers or executive board members of these student organizations and had them distribute it to their members. Those taking the survey are a mixture of college students from colleges and universities in Minnesota and Wisconsin. At the end of the survey is a question asking if they are interested in a follow up interview and that is where participants for the interviews are chosen. Parents who are involved in this study are parents of the students who interviewed. Most of the interviews are done on campus. The parental interviews took place at their house and the educator interviews were done at coffee shops and through Skype.

### **3.5 Data Gathering**

An online survey was created with questions ranging from education levels, family information, and distance of colleges to cultural norms and traditions. These questions can be found in the Appendix. The questions for the parents are different than those of the students and educators because of the nature of the research.

After permission is given by the advisers and executive board members of the Hmong organizations, the researcher sends an email with a link to the survey to these individuals. They then forward this email to their members. Some of the student interviews are done in Hmong because the student feels more comfortable speaking Hmong than English. All the parental interviews are done in Hmong because the parents were limited with their English.

### **3.6 Analysis**

Data analysis of the survey was done using statistical software (IBM, SPSS Statistics 20, 2011) Microsoft Excel. Statistical techniques such as descriptive statistics, Pearson's Chi-square test for association, and the t-test for comparing means were used with the data. The survey results are a combination of categorical data and continuous data; that explains the use of two different tests for association. Results are sorted by gender and then variables are tested against one another to see if there are any associations or differences between male and female.

Data analyses for the interviews take on a narrative approach in which the interviews were transcribed and translated into English. Careful analysis was done to compare the results of the survey and interviews for conflicts or association.

### **3.7 Summary**

Hmong women continue to defeat the barriers that stand in their way to attaining a college degree. The 2010 census even show that they are attending and graduating from college at the same rate as the men; however, it seems that they are not going far away from home as often as men do. This research is a mix methods study that surveyed and interviewed Hmong men and women college students, their parents, and educators in Minnesota and Wisconsin. Question topics included distance from home the participant chose to go to college, culture, and demographics. Statistical technique was used to analyze the survey data while a narrative approach was used to analyze the interviews. The results are explained in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER 4

### Results and Discussion

#### **4.1 Introduction**

Hmong students from various colleges were asked to participate in a survey in an attempt to find out if there are differences between gender in barriers, trends, or cultural norms that may play a role in their college decision. The first part of this chapter will describe the results of the survey, interviews, and data analysis and then lead into the second part which discusses these findings.

#### **4.2 Survey**

##### 4.2.1 Questions

Questions on the survey are designed to find the demographics, education level, family and cultural information of the participants. Demographic information includes if they are first generation immigrant, first generation college attendee, and how long they have reside in the United States. Educational information that are asked is how far their college is from home, what type of institution they are attending, and whether or not they live on campus. Questions about family and culture asked if these participants are still abiding by Hmong traditions and how important culture is to them, how involved they were in high school, and how much responsibility in addition to school work did they feel that they had while in high school. The survey also asked how involved their parents were in their college decisions and if they feel that their sex played a role in the amount of extra-curricular activities, parental trust, and additional responsibility at home.

##### 4.2.2 Tests for Association

The major statistical techniques that are used are basic descriptive statistics, Pearson's Chi-square test of association, and t-test for comparing means. The Chi-square test is used to find if an observed distribution is due to chance. Data is counted and divided into categories and built into contingency tables. The purpose of this test is to see if there is an association between variables. The variables that utilize this test are between males, females and variables such as distance from home, duration of time in the United States and type of institutions.

The purpose of the t-test is used to compare the means of two variables to see if there are significant differences between continuous data. These survey questions include the ones that ask students to rate their college experience, extra-curricular activities, and parental involvement in college decisions.

#### 4.2.3 Findings

There are a total of 83 responses; however, only 73 of these are complete. This survey is only for students who are at least 18 years or older; because of this one response cannot be used. There is an overwhelming discrepancy between male respondents' and female; of the 73 only 10 are men, as shown in table 1. It is unclear why this is the case but the author suspects that it might have to do with the title of the research shown in the survey, which was Multi-Cultural Recruitment: A Case of Hmong Girls, causing male students to think that their answers may be insignificant or they were not invited to be participants. Most of the students are born in the US amounting to a good 75% of the response as shown in table 1. Of the ones who are foreign-born, 3 have been in the states for less than 10 years.

Table 1.

*Demographic Information of Participants*

Variable	Male		Female		Total		Statistics	
	n	(%)	n	(%)	n	(%)	Chi-Square	p
Education							0.47	0.93
High School	2	(20.0)	16	(25.4)	18	(24.7)		
College less than 2 years	5	(50.0)	27	(42.9)	32	(43.8)		
2-year college degree	1	(10.0)	4	(6.3)	5	(6.8)		
4-year college degree	2	(20.0)	16	(25.4)	18	(24.7)		
Total	10	(100.0)	63	(100.0)	73	(100.0)		
Duration of living in USA							3.24	0.20
Less than 5 years	0	(0.0)	0	(0.0)	0	(0.0)		
5-10 years	2	(20.0)	3	(4.8)	5	(6.8)		
10+ years, not born here	2	(20.0)	12	(19.0)	14	(19.2)		
My whole life, born in the US	6	(60.0)	48	(76.2)	54	(74.0)		
Total	10	(100.0)	63	(100.0)	73	(100.0)		
Age	Mean	(SD)	Mean	(SD)	Mean	(SD)	t (df)	p
	21.3	(3.7)	20.8	(2.2)	20.8	(2.4)	0.64 (67)	0.52

Table 2.

*College Education: Pursuit, Value and Experience by Gender*

Variable	Male (n=10)		Female (n=63)		Statistics	
	n	(%)	n	(%)	Chi-Square	p
Type of College Pursue						
2-year	0	(0.0)	1	(1.6)	0.16	0.69
4-year	10	(100.0)	62	(98.4)		
Value on College Education(1-10)	Mean	(SD)	Mean	(SD)	t (df)	p
	9.2	(0.9)	9.4	(1.0)		
College Experience (1-10)	8.0	(1.6)	8.0	(1.5)	-0.03 (67)	0.97

Table 2 shows unsurprising results that the students value a higher education and have good college experiences. It is unfortunate that an overwhelming majority of the students who responded to the survey are from 4-year institutions. This might be because of the nature of 2-year versus 4-year college experiences and should be explored in future research.

Table 3.

*Family: The First person in the Family by Gender*

Variable	Male (n=10)	Female (n=63)	Statistics	
	n (%)	n (%)	Chi-Square	p
First, Second, or Third Generation Hmong Student?			2.10	0.35
First generation student	6 (60.0)	38 (60.3)		
Second generation student	4 (40.0)	16 (25.4)		
Third generation student	0 (0.0)	9 (14.3)		
First, second or third generation college attendee?			2.84	0.24
First generation college attendee	9 (90.0)	40 (63.5)		
Second generation college attendee	1 (10.0)	18 (28.6)		
Third generation college attendee	0 (0.0)	5 (7.9)		
The oldest, in middle, or the youngest in your siblings?				
The oldest	5 (50.0)	15 (23.8)	3.02	0.22
In middle	4 (40.0)	36 (57.1)		
The youngest	1 (10.0)	12 (19.0)		
The first person attended a college in your family?				
Yes	4 (40.0)	17 (27.0)	0.71	0.40

Table 3 shows that over 60% of the female students reported to be first generation college students while 90% of the male are first generation students, which seems about right considering how little time the Hmong have been in the United States. Half of the males reported to be the oldest sibling in their family while only 23.8% of the females are the oldest of their siblings.

There is a good distribution among the female students in terms of distance from home as shown in Table 4; by contrast, 80% of the male respondents attend a college that is over 100 miles from home, which was significantly different from even distribution among the female students (chi-square – 13.37,  $p < .01$ ). Thus, it can be concluded that there is a difference between male and female college students regarding the distance that they chose to go to away from home to pursue a higher education.



Table 4.

*College Education: Distance of College by Gender*

Variable	Male (n=10)	Female (n=63)	Statistics	
	n (%)	n (%)	Chi-Square	p
Distance of College				
Closer than 10 miles	0 (0.0)	13 (20.6)	13.37	0.01
11 - 25 miles	0 (0.0)	13 (20.6)		
26 - 50 miles	1 (10.0)	10 (15.9)		
51 - 100 miles	1 (10.0)	12 (19.0)		
Greater than 100 miles	8 (80.0)	15 (23.8)		
Distance & College Decision(1-10)	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)	t (df)	p
Importance of distance	6.6 (2.0)	6.8 (2.1)	-0.32 (71)	0.75
Role of parents and family	7.5 (2.1)	6.5 (2.9)	1.00 (71)	0.32
Role of being a girl (or a boy)	7.0 (2.1)	7.2 (2.8)	-0.19 (71)	0.85

Table 5.

*College Education: Living on Campus by Gender*

Variable	Male (n=10)	Female (n=63)	Statistics	
	n (%)	n (%)	Chi-Square	p
Live on Campus				
Yes	6 (60.0)	44 (69.8)	0.49	0.49
Live on Campus	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)	t (df)	p
Role of parents and family	6.0 (2.7)	5.5 (3.4)	0.48 (71)	0.63
Role of being a girl (or a boy)	4.3 (2.4)	5.3 (3.4)	-1.18 (71)	0.26

Table 5 shows that almost 70% of female students live on campus, which is similar to 60% from male student response. When asked how much impact parents or family have on this decision to stay on campus, the average response is 5.5 out of 10 for female and 6.0 for male, which is not significantly different. Likewise, when asked if being a woman in the Hmong community has an impact on the distance that they chose to leave home for college, the average response is 7.2 for female, which is similar to 7.0 for male when asked if being a man in the Hmong community has an impact in the distance.

Table 6.

*Family: Trust and Culture by Gender*

Variable	Male (n=10)	Female (n=63)	Statistics	
	n (%)	n (%)	Chi-Square	p
Household Culture during Growing-up				
Abide by very traditional Hmong culture	2 (20.0)	14 (22.2)	0.94	0.63
Somewhat abide by traditional Hmong culture	8 (80.0)	44 (69.8)		
No longer abide by traditional Hmong culture	0 (0.0)	5 (7.9)		
Parents Trust	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)	t (df)	p
On your going out with friends?	8.1 (1.5)	7.0 (2.3)	1.42 (70)	0.16
Role of being a girl (or a boy) in parents' trust?	7.6 (2.1)	7.9 (2.5)	-0.40(70)	0.69

Table 7.

*High School Experience by Gender*

Variable	Male (n=10)	Female (n=63)	Statistics	
	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)	t (df)	p
High School Experience (a rating of 1-10)				
After-school activity	5.3 (3.1)	7.7 (2.0)	-2.36 (71)	0.04*
Role of being a girl (or a boy) in after-school activity	6.2 (2.3)	5.9 (3.1)	0.36 (71)	0.77
Responsibility at home in addition to homework	7.8 (1.7)	7.6 (2.2)	0.19 (70)	0.85
Role of being a girl (or a boy) in responsibility at home	7.3 (1.8)	7.7 (2.7)	-0.49 (71)	0.62
A job while in high school	4.4 (3.3)	6.0 (3.4)	-1.37 (71)	0.18

Note. \* $p < 0.05$

Other interesting findings are shown in Table 6 and Table 7 that males record a higher trust level with parents; The male's average response for how much they feel their parents trust them in going out with their friends is an 8.1 when compared to a 7.0 from the female response. Although this difference is not statistically significant ( $t(70)=1.42, p = 0.16$ ), it is worth paying attention to. Interestingly, females are more involved in high school activity and having a job. The female's average response on a scale of 1-10 with 10 being the highest on high school after-school activity involvement is 7.7 compared to the male's 5.3, which was a significant difference ( $t(71) = -2.36, p=0.04$ ). Also, although there were no significant differences ( $p=0.18$ ), female students tend to have a job while in high school ( $M = 6.0$ ) than male students ( $M = 4.4$ ).

### 4.3 Interviews

#### 4.3.1 Questions

The purpose of the interviews was to hear from current college students, their parents and educators to see if these results match well with the survey. Some questions are similar such as how far away from home they chose to go to college and if family are a big part of this decision. One of the questions was regards to gender roles, what these participants believe are important in the Hmong community and if these values have changed from what they may were a decade ago. One of the questions was regarding marriage and if participants felt it would be harder for women to find a Hmong husband if they choose to go to the higher educational route versus marrying early. These questions can be found in the Appendix and analyses of these interviews are presented on a narrative approach.

#### 4.3.2 Interview Results: Students

There are 9 students who agreed to interview with 8 of these students attending 4-year colleges that are over 100 miles away from home. Seven of the students live or have lived in residence halls at some point while only 2 stayed off campus. Of the 9 students, 6 are female students; 1 of these includes the student who went to a 2-year school and stayed at home during her college experience. Two of the students, one male and another female are second generation college students and 6 are first generation immigrants who were born in different countries. Three of these foreign-born students came as recently as 2004, which is impressive that they are already in college pursuing 4-year degrees from rigorous liberal arts colleges.

Everyone says that the value of a college education is very high and is top priority to attaining rewarding careers and getting high paying jobs. Mai, a young lady

who is studying biology and has dreams of being a doctor believes that getting a higher education means one has to work less to get paid more. Choua is a second generation student who mentions that in addition to a rewarding career, she is also looking forward to enjoying college and getting the experience such as partying, student organizations, and learning how to be independent. The rest of the other students seem to put more emphasis on going to college for a good job; this might have to do with the fact that most of the other students are first generation students who came from lower socio-economic statuses. This seems to be a trend among first generation students of color pursuing a higher education.

Two of the male students chose to go far away for college because they want to get away from the family and friends so that they can focus more on school work and being a college student; they did not meet any resistance from parents concerning their decision. The other male student, Tou, says that he waited until the very last possible minute to make a choice. Tou came to the United States as part of the recent wave of Hmong immigrants that began arriving in 2004; he is the oldest and feels obligated to help his siblings. His parents are very involved with his college decision and they weighed all the positives and negatives of going away versus staying at home prior to coming to a conclusion as a family. His final decision to leave home has to do with the fact that he will be too distracted at home if he chooses to stay near; although his mother wants him close because she wants him to stay near for safety reasons.

Choua says that her choice to leave home came from her father, who believes that she should go as far away as she can so that she won't be distracted by the city life. Even though this is the case with Choua, it is a rare occasion among Hmong female

students, most of whom were encouraged to stay close to home. Sheng is one of the late arrivals to the US who was told that she needed to stay close to home so that her parents can watch after her. She is able to convince her parents that going away from home is a good choice after they as a family attended an event hosted by her current college. During this event, Sheng's parents met with a Hmong Admissions Counselor and a female Hmong doctor who graduated from her current institution. These individuals enlightened her parents that it is okay for Hmong females to go to that particular college and they are living examples of those who have been through the college and are doing well in the community. The final factor that allowed Sheng to enroll at her current institution is the idea that there is a good-sized number of Hmong students at that college as well as a couple of Hmong staff there who can be resources and contacts for them should they need help getting a hold of Sheng. Sheng did mention that she has friends and cousins who had to go to college in the twin cities near home because their parents did not like the idea of them going far. Sheng's story is nearly identical to May who also attended the same event and enrolled at the same college; in fact, during move-in, their parents requested that the two room together because they are both Hmong. Knowing that they are roommates, Hmong, and female alleviated many of the concerns that the parents had regarding safety, academic focus, and other living concerns.

Gender role still seems to play a part in the distance that Hmong women can choose to go to college. A young part-time mother who did not have a successful college experience agreed to interview. Shoua's college story is one where she does not wish upon other women and hopes that she is an isolated incident. Shoua's parents

made the decision for her to go to a nearby community college so that she may come home after school to help out with chores, babysitting her younger siblings, and other duties that young Hmong women has in the home. She is no longer in school after deciding to marry and have a child, but her message is that it was too hard having to balance chores, school work, and financial issues. She isn't sure if she will pursue college anytime soon.

Although many of the students seem to agree that culture and gender expectations have changed somewhat, when asked what they thought are roles of Hmong men and Hmong women, they still described very similar results to what other research studies have found. This is that males are privileged, have more time due to less responsibility at home in addition to school work, and more expectations to be the main income provider. Chee, a senior at a small liberal arts college in Minnesota mentions "unwritten norms" between men and women which is men have a reputation to keep as the dominant figure of the family and community. Chee mentions pride as one of the main reasons that he must pursue a higher education because a college degree will boost his status in the Hmong community. He believes that Hmong women should get educated so that they can help pay for the bills, but that they should still conform to these "unwritten norms". His idea of a perfect wife is an educated woman with a good job who also knows how to cook, clean, and raise children.

The females of the group mention similar expectations between men and women; however, they are all in favor of equality and that men should help out with chores at home. One big trend that pops out is they believe having these extra chores during high school actually helps them in college. Mai, the junior biology major, says

that if boys only know how to use their time in high school, they should have a huge advantage over girls. She says that because males don't have as much responsibilities, they tend to just slack off; thus when they come to college where they actually have to take care of their own basic needs, they struggle to balance their time. As a joke, Mai also concluded that in her opinion, girls just function better.

Early marriage does not seem to be as huge of an issue according to these young men and women. Most agree that finding a partner does not have anything to do with age anymore, but how to maintain healthy relationships while in college. See is a freshman in college who still dates her boyfriend at home. See isn't afraid of the distance because she says that with technology now days; it is easier to maintain her relationship. See does think that women getting educated will change how they choose a partner however. See thinks that women's expectations will rise significantly after getting educated and that the main concern with finding a Hmong mate is that the pool to choose from will have shrunk significantly. She sees this as one of the reasons why Hmong females marry so early and why Hmong men prefers younger wives.

Interviews with the students yield interesting results. Culture is still important to Hmong college students; however, it is not a barrier to higher education. All the students believe that culture is changing and that education is the catalyst to that change. Hmong people value education for both men and women; however, many still value culture as a guiding principal to how they live life.

#### 4.3.3 Interview Results: Parents

There are a total of 4 parents that interviewed for this research; two males and two females. One of the male, Nou, is the father of Tou, the student that came in 2004.

The other is Sheng's father, Sai, the student that successfully convinced her family to let her enroll at a faraway college. Houa is the mother of a student that participated in the survey but chose not to interview. This student spoke with her mother and contacted the researcher to participate in the study; the daughter goes to a small private college in Minnesota. Mee is the mother of Chee another student interviewee. All of these parental interviews occur at their homes and spoke primarily in Hmong.

Culture is huge for these parents who value traditions as evenly as attaining an education. Nou says that tradition is more than a guiding principle, but a way of life that has been shown to him by his father and grandfathers. Tradition tells the Hmong's unwritten history more than any book because the Hmong culture adapts and borrows from their country of occupancy; therefore, to trace Hmong history, one would simply have to trace Hmong traditions.

All the parents believe that gender roles have changed due to education. They all agree that both men and women should have equal opportunity to attain a college degree and that college is the way of the future; however, young men and women should not forget their cultural identity. Mee sees that the role of a Hmong man will never change as the head of the household; it is the man's responsibility to protect, provide, and guide the family. A family without a father is like a snake without a head, the body wreaths and wiggles with no sense of direction. She does think that both men and women have to be educated, work, share chores and rear children. "The big change between men and women roles today is that income is based on the tip of the pen, no longer the edge of the scythe" (Mee Vue, 2012).



Houa is an uneducated mother whose own mom refused to allow her to pursue an education back in the 90's. She regrets to this day that she wasn't brave enough to rebel like many other Hmong women whom eventually carve a path for Hmong women everywhere. Because of her own failure, she encourages all her children, regardless of sex to pursue college. She supports all decisions as long as the child is willing to go to college, whether that is far or not. Houa has three children in college, two female students and one male; all are attending universities at least one hour away from home.

Parental trust does not appear to be determined by gender. All the parents point out that they know which of their children they can trust because they raised them. Sai says that his desire to have his daughter closer to home has to do more with her safety than trust. His fears stem from horrid stories of rape, party, and other negative events happening on college campuses. This is one of the reasons why he made sure his daughter roomed with another Hmong girl at college. He and his wife were extremely involved in the college search process and only after speaking to admissions, college alumni, and relatives did they allow Sheng to leave for college so far away from home.

All the parents agree that daughters have more responsibility at home; however, this is not because they favor one over another. In the past, men did the heavy work such as chopping woods while women cooked and cleaned. In America, there is still cooking and cleaning to be done; however, no more woods to be chopped. As a result, males don't have a many chores around the house. They value a daughter who knows how to cook and clean because they in return would want a daughter-in-law who knows how to cook and clean; thus they make sure their daughters know the female expectations.

These interviews yield an unexpected result, that Hmong parents don't trust one gender more than the other. It explains why distance might be a factor between sexes when families choose a college for their sons or daughters. Trust in the institution's ability to care for their children is a factor that Hmong parents will utilize in whether or not they will let their daughters go to that school. Another important finding is that these new waves of Hmong immigrants are progressing at a much faster pace than the earlier arrivals because they have seen the mistakes and success of those that came before them.

#### 4.3.4 Interview Results: Educators

Three educators, two women and one man, agreed to interview after receiving information about the research plans, theory and goals. The two women, Dia and Gao, are both from Wisconsin institutions while the male educator, Kong, currently works at an urban Minnesota state college in St Paul. Kong has been an educator for seven years with experiences in admissions and academic advising. Both Dia and Gao are currently Hmong admissions counselor and has experience working with Hmong high school students.

All three of them have college experience that echoes that of both students and parents. Kong is a University of Minnesota graduate who remembers really struggling in college. Kong's first choice college is actually a small private liberal arts college that is two hours from the Twin Cities; however, his parents refused to let him go because all his older siblings are at the time attended the University of Minnesota and lived at home. Kong mentions that it is not the norm at that time for parents to allow their daughters to stay in the dorms; hence he was surprised when his oldest sister was able to

leave home and stay in the dorms. She did transfer back to the U of M because she became too homesick. Kong says that it never crossed his mind to move out with friends or other family; he knew he needed to stay home and work to help his parents pay the bills. All his other siblings did the same throughout college.

Both Dia and Gao said that their parents did not let them go far from home for college but that they just rebelled and enrolled at institutions that were not near home. In fact, Dia went to a college in her hometown; however, her parents moved to Minnesota after her first year in college and wanted her to move with them. She refused to move and her parents finally agreed to let her stay because Dia has an uncle who is still in town. Knowing that there is family in town to act as a security blanket in case of any emergency, Dia's parents agreed to let her stay at her institution. She did say that her parents made sure she roomed with a second cousin while attending college.

It appears that the reason why Dia and Gao were pressured to go to institutions near home is because they are women and their parents were concerned for their safety in addition to needing them at home. Gao says that her parents did not agree at all and were really mad when she chose to leave home because she is the eldest and is needed to help cook, clean and babysit.

Everyone agrees that it should be easier to do school work and succeed as a male student because males don't have as many chores at home. Gender role plays a part in this because parents want their daughters to know how to be a good nyab (daughter-in-law); thus, there is an emphasis at home for girls to be educated in cooking, cleaning, and babysitting. Kong feels that although the Hmong are being

educated, gender roles are important in the Hmong community because there are things such as nurture that women are just better at naturally.

Hmong educators such as these three have seen that the barriers to education among female Hmong students have changed over the years. Parents of students that they are currently working with are more perceptive to the idea of education for both men and women because many of them are themselves educated. One of the main differences is that there are a number of Hmong educators now who can work directly with parents, alleviating many of the concerns and trust issues that was not available awhile back. The biggest struggle is still distance because culture remains to be prominent in the Hmong community and gender roles are a large part of the Hmong culture.

#### **4.4 Discussion**

##### **4.4.1 Cultural Values and Gender Roles**

Culture and traditions are integral parts of the Hmong community and life in America. The survey shows that over 92% of the participants came from a household that abides by Hmong traditions. Every person who interviewed places a high value on culture as a way of life. This is important to know as educators because as Kong mentions, cultural values place a strong emphasis on family and social events, which usually happens on weekends. Men are expected to be at these events to learn the traditions, butcher the meat, and coordinate the show while women are expected to do much of the preparation such as cooking rice and preparing many of the dishes. Because of the expectation to be at these events, not very many Hmong students have time to do college visits that colleges usually also host on weekends.

It appears that there is a phenomenon tying Hmong women gender expectations to education. Hmong elders place a high value on daughters who know how to cook, clean, and rear kids; therefore, many daughters have additional chores and responsibilities to school work growing up. This is especially true for those who also happen to be eldest among the siblings as stated by Gao and why she left home for college.

The result is not necessarily bad for Hmong women. Many students during the interview believe that it is easier to do school work and succeed as a male because of fewer chores; this is true if males actually take this time to study. Because women have extra chores and do not have as many opportunities to go out as boys, they take this time to focus on school work. The extra work means that they have to balance their time; hence they build time management skills. Kong actually believes that this lack of juggling multiple things on a daily basis creates a disadvantage for male students because when they leave home for college, they lack this set which does not bode well for their chances of success.

This perceived benefit for women is bitter sweet as proven by stories like Shoua and her inability to escape these conditions. Having to continue to take on chores while adding the extra work and monetary cost associated with college might just be too much for anyone to handle. Some women realize this and leave home at the expense of their family.

#### 4.4.3 Marriage and Education

Bic Ngo (2002), researcher at the University of Wisconsin Madison, says that most Hmong women will marry between the age of 11 and 23 years old. Her research

in combination with another researcher Stacey Lee (2001), also from Madison, has found that early pregnancy and marriage was a barrier to education that many women face. Part of this research is to find if the trend still exists but also if it will be harder to marry if women chose to get educated first before marriage.

Most of the women in this research say that it will be harder to find a Hmong husband, but that it isn't impossible. Women like Mai and See say that part of the reason why women don't have to choose between education and marriage anymore is because technology makes it easier to maintain long distance relationship.

Those who do end up marrying early do still face similar challenge to the past. Hmong elders value a daughter-in-law who knows the gender expectations. Dia says that those women who marry early face the decision to abandon the college path or at least will be extremely limited due to the fact that they have to go stay with their husband and his family. The in-laws are less forgiving and see college as an opportunity to cheat on her husband. She will either have to go to a nearby college or not go at all.

The women in this study acknowledge that getting educated will raise expectations for their mates. They want someone who is educated and in some instance more educated than they are. They also believe that being educated means more equality in the relationship; thus, limiting the pool of men who would be willing to accept their newfound independence.

There is a disparity between what the males in the interviews say compared to the females. Women like Sheng believe that it doesn't matter who has the higher degree as long as they support each other. Men however seem to view this as the

women wearing the pants in the family. The men of the interview stated that Hmong men will be embarrassed and perhaps unwilling to marry a woman who has a higher degree than himself. Hmong men see this as a blow to their ego because they want to be seen as the head of the family; in America, that means education and income.

Although this may be the case, the men also stated that they would be willing to marry an educated woman and swallow their pride if the woman has a good job; it is a bonus if the wife values culture and is willing to conform to gender expectations. Kong for example believes that if his wife was to have a higher degree than him, he would one day reach the same plateau or surpass it; the difference is that he sees this as a motivation for him to challenge himself.

#### 4.4.4 Distance

Distance from home is the most common theme that came up over and over again throughout this research. Both sets of data, the survey and interviews provide significant evidence that there is a difference between male and female Hmong college students and the distance away from home that they choose to go for college. An overwhelming majority of the male participants are attending colleges that are over 100 miles away from home while it is more evenly distributed among females.

This phenomenon seems to be a combination of gender roles, cultural values, and marriage. Parents are afraid to allow their children, especially the daughters, to leave and go far from home because they fear for their health, academic focus, and general well-being. More than one interviewee mentioned having to room with another Hmong or family member to alleviate some of these concerns.

Marriage comes into play with distance as well because it is customary for women to go live with their husbands and his family. It looks bad if she chooses to go to an institution that will require her to live there. In many instances she is left with no choice but to leave her institution if she marries and her husband does not live near her college.

#### **4.5 Conclusion**

The survey results seem to be consistent with the interview results in terms of education, barriers, gender roles, cultural values, and college choices for women. The Hmong community is in a stage of continuous change and education seems to be the catalyst for change. Being educated comes with earning power, community respect, equality, independence, and status. Recent data according to the 2010 census suggest that men are still graduating from high school at a higher rate than women, but women are attaining 4-year degrees or higher at the same rate as men. This was not the case a decade ago when Hmong women used to be looked down upon if they choose to go to college.

This study set out to see if some of the barriers exist or have changed through surveying and interviewing Hmong college students, parents, and educators in the Midwest. Findings include that women have overcome many of the barriers and have made a case for themselves that they should have equal opportunity for a higher education. Given these opportunities, they have become extremely successful; especially because they seem to have more practice with time management and balance in their lives due to the same barriers that traditionally kept them from pursuing a college degree. Gender roles, expectations, and additional chores force women to learn



these skills, which when applied to the college setting, gives them an advantage over their male counterpart.

It appears that both men and women are equally encouraged to pursue a college degree so that they can find good jobs to support their families. This has to do with the fact that earning potential is often tied to education level. The big difference between Hmong men and women is that according to the data gathered in this research, men seems to go further away from home than women due to cultural values.

## CHAPTER 5

### Conclusion

#### 5.1 Introduction

The Hmong began arriving in the United States for over three decades ago and have made significant progress in education between both men and women. Because the Hmong have never had a country of their own, they are used to adapting to which ever country that they reside, including American culture. Culturally Hmong men have done the heavy lifting and work; however, in America there is less heavy lifting to do. This leads to males having less to do at home and in combination with their role as the primary income earner, the belief is that they should do better in school because that is the key to a good paying job.

Women on the other hand are expected to stay at home and raise the children with little expectation to do well educationally. This all changed when women pioneers began breaking out of the cultural norms in the late 1980's and pursued a higher education. This caused community pushback because getting an education meant that women were not marrying as early, becoming more independent and closed the income gap. Research shows that women have overcome many of the barriers to obtaining a higher education and are now doing just as well as men in college; however, the theory is that due to cultural values they are encouraged to stay closer to home when attending college.

This research takes on a mix method approach by surveying and interviewing college students in Minnesota and Wisconsin to investigate if this theory about distance is correct. Over 60 Hmong women and 10 Hmong men responded to the survey.

Results showed that there is significant evidence that there is a difference between men and women regarding the distance that they chose to go away for college. Through interviews, the researcher found that parents believe in equal college opportunity for both men and women. One reason why parents encourage their daughters to stay close to home is so that they can help with the chores that are expected of them. In addition, they want their daughters to stay close so that they can watch after them, not because they don't trust the daughters, but they may not trust the college's ability to ensure their child's well-being and safety. In some cases, this fear can be alleviated if there is a significant number of Hmong at that college. In some cases, they even request their daughters to room with other Hmong female students.

This research also found that although Hmong women are choosing to go to college, it may not be at the expense of marriage. Some of the students who interviewed spoke of maintaining healthy relationships using technology that did not exist a decade ago. These same Hmong women did acknowledge that education increases their expectations when choosing a partner and are more willing to except marriage outside of the race even if that is against Hmong traditions. Educated Hmong men also expect an educated wife but want a woman who values Hmong culture. These findings have some interesting academic implications for the future because Hmong women are catching up fast and may even surpass men very soon in attaining higher degrees.

## 5.2 Academic Implications

With the knowledge that women are not going far from home due to safety and comfort reasons, colleges who want to recruit this population need to be prominent in

the Hmong community. The Hmong community highly value education and takes highly into consideration word of mouth. If colleges work hard on branding, showcasing their successful alums, and showing parents that they have resources to help their daughters succeed at their institutions, they will have increased their chances of recruiting this population dramatically.

Hmong people are naturally a social community that draws one another. Word of mouth spreads fast among the Hmong community and they learn from one another's mistakes. This is shown by this third wave of immigrants. The researcher is quite impressed with the progress that some of these students have made since arriving in 2004. One would expect newly arrived immigrants to take time adjusting, make mistakes and learn from them, taking years and a couple of generations to fully settle into American society. It appears that the Hmong diaspora has taught them the importance of adaptation to a new culture and they continue to take full advantage of opportunities. With over 60,000 Hmong in the Twin Cities and its metro, colleges would be wise to understand this population because they will sustain generations of college prospects.

### 5.3 Marital and Cultural Implications

This research shows that educated women have increased their expectations for their husbands. Based on current trends, they may surpass men soon in achieving academic success. The pool of eligible Hmong bachelors will decrease if the trend continues leading to a major shift in culture. Hmong parents were asked during the interview if a woman can ever become a clan leader and there are mixed results. Mee was adamant that men will continue to lead while Nou, proud father of a promising

daughter says that he will be willing to listen to advice from a great leader whether the leader is male or female. He says that one of the reasons why the Hmong are such a male dominated population is because no one has ever taken the initiative to change traditions. He sees these new women leaders as pioneers not only as agents of change in education, but also culture.

One topic continues to come up with the increased expectations and that is women may be willing to marry outside of their own race; in the Hmong community, it is still strictly out of the norm. This may be a phenomenon that might interest researchers because it seems to be taking shape and will have high implications in the near future.

Kong, the male educator is in the process of studying Hmong cognition and Hmong consciousness, suggests that culture is changing and in the heart of this change is education. The researcher's discussion with him concluded with the idea that education regresses one's draw to culture and traditions, making him or her "Americanized", but that once highly educated, one is able to see the value of self, culture, traditions and identity.

### 5.3 Strength and Weaknesses

The biggest strength of this research would be that the researcher himself is Hmong and is able to understand the biases and values of his participants. This creates a comforting atmosphere in which interviews are authentic, heartwarming, and trustworthy discussions takes place. Being Hmong also means that the researcher can speak with elders in their native tongue and easily translate these conversations which may not have been done before in the subject of Hmong women's education quest.

Participants, especially women, warmed up to the researcher and were excited to be part of a research that may bring about ideas for future generations to follow. Even the men were optimistic about the future and the Hmong's place in educational history in the United States.

The biggest disappointment and weakness is that there was a disparity between the number of male (n=10) and female (n=63) participants as well as a disparity between 4-year (n=71) and 2-year (n=1) college students. It is unclear why this happened but the author suspects that it might have to do with the title of the research shown in the survey, which was Multi-cultural Recruitment: A Case of Hmong Girls, causing male students to think that their answers may be insignificant or they are not invited to be participants.

#### 5.4 Suggestions for Future Research

This study sets the stage for new and exciting research topics. The focus of this research has been on Hmong women's pursuit of higher education; but what about Hmong men's struggle in today's society? The researcher's exposure to other Hmong educators is best summarized by Dia's ideas of barriers to education facing Hmong men today. In her interview, this Hmong educator from Wisconsin suspects that Hmong men are eager to enter the work force and opting into two-year degrees while seeing less value in the liberal arts. In addition, pop culture and gang affiliation appears to be a troubling trend among young male teenagers in large urban high schools. This might be an important issue that needs to be studied in future research.

#### 5.5 Conclusion

This research shows that as of now, Hmong women appears to be attending colleges closer to home than their male counterparts; however, interviews with those that did go far reveals that with the right recruitment message, staff, tools and resources, colleges can recruit these young Hmong ladies into their institution. It just takes a little effort to appeal to them, their parents, and the overall Hmong community.

The pursuit of higher education among Hmong men and women has seen a major shift in the past decade. Women continue to defy adversity and excel in the classroom to being leaders in the Hmong community, leading to a major cultural shift. Hmong people, culture and traditions are in a continuous elastic state of change and it begins with young scholars like those featured in this research. Their struggles and victory over adversities will have an impact on future generations of college prospect and institutions of higher education should pay close attention to their stories. Because women are so used to juggling many balls i.e. school, work, chores, babysitting and educating young siblings, that when exposed to the college environment in which one has to juggle many things, they excel. Men on the other hand struggle with the concept of time management and balance in their life. It is ironic that these traditional barriers to women's education of the past decade have evolved to become their biggest strength.

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## Appendix

### Survey for Students

#### Education

- 1) What is the highest level of education that you have achieved?
  - a) Still in High School
  - b) High School
  - c) Some College
  - d) 2-year Degree
  - e) 4-year Degree or more
- 2) On a scale of 1-10, what value do you place on a college education?
- 3) What type of college are you looking for or have attended?
  - a) 2-year
  - b) 4-year
- 4) How far away did you attend college?
  - a) Within 10 miles away
  - b) within 25 miles away
  - c) within 50 miles away
  - d) within 100 miles away
  - e) greater than 100 miles away
- 4) On a scale of 1-10, how would you rate your college experience if you have previously attended college?
- 5) On a scale of 1-10, how important is distance away from home in your college decision?
- 5) On a scale of 1-10, how important does family play a role in your college decision?
- 6) On a scale of 1-10, if you attended a college closer than 25 miles away, how much role did parents or family have in the decision?
- 7) On a scale of 1-10, if you attended a college further than 25 miles away, how much role did parents or family have on the decision?
- 8) Did you live on campus?

9) On a scale of 1-10, if you lived on campus, how much role did parents or family have in making the decision?

10) On a scale of 1-10, if you did not live on campus, how much role did parents or family have in making the decision?

11) On a scale of 1-10, how much did you think being a boy gave you more options or limited you to make these decisions above?

12) On a scale of 1-10, how much did you think being a girl gave you more options or limited you to make these decisions above?

### Family

1) What is your gender?

- a) Male
- b) Female

2) Are you a first, second, or third generation Hmong student?

- a) First Generation
- b) Second Generation
- c) Third Generation or more

3) Are you a first, second or third college attendee?

- a) First Generation
- b) Second Generation
- c) Third Generation

4) Are you the oldest in the family?

- a) Yes
- b) No

5) Are you the youngest in the family?

- a) Yes
- b) No

6) Are you the first to attend any college in the family?

- a) Yes
- b) No

7) On a scale of 1-10, how much would you say your parents trust you going out with friends?

8) Do you think being a girl in the Hmong community effect the trust your parents have in you in going out?

- a) Yes
- b) No

9) Do you think being a boy in the Hmong community effect the trust your parents have in you going out?

- a) Yes
- b) No

10) How long have you been in the United State?

- a) 5 Years or less
- b) Between 5 and 10 years
- c) 10 Years or more
- d) I was born here

11) How would you describe the household that you grew up in?

- a) Abide by very traditional Hmong culture
- b) Somewhat abide by traditional Hmong culture
- c) No longer abide by traditional Hmong culture

#### High School

1) Did you participate in after-school activity?

- a) Yes
- b) No

2) Do you feel that being a girl limited you or gave you more options to participating in after-school activity?

- a) Yes
- b) No

3) Do you feel that being a boy in the Hmong society limited or gave you more options to participate in after-school activity?

- a) Yes
- b) No

4) On a scale of 1-10, how much responsibility did you have in addition to homework at home?

- a) Yes
- b) No

5) Did you feel that being a girl in the Hmong household, you were given more responsibility at home in addition to homework such as chores, babysitting, etc.?

- a) Yes
- b) No

6) Did you feel that being a boy in the Hmong household, you were given more responsibility at home in addition to homework such as chores, babysitting, etc.?

- a) Yes
- b) No

7) Did you have a job while in high school?

- a) Yes
- b) No

### **Interview Questions for Parents**

- 1) How long have you been in the US?
- 2) Are you a first, second or third generation Hmong?
- 3) Do you still abide by traditional Hmong culture?
- 4) What value do you put in the Hmong traditions?
- 5) What do you see as a role of a man in the Hmong household here in the US?
- 6) What do you see as a role of a woman in the Hmong household here in the US?
- 7) What do you think a college education means?
- 8) What value do you put in a college education?
- 9) Would you encourage your son or daughter to pursue a college education?
- 10) Do you have any sons or daughters in college or have been through college?
- 11) How involved were you in the college decision process?
- 12) Is your child who is looking for a college or has gone to college a son or a daughter?
- 13) How far away did you son or daughter go to college or are thinking about going to college?
- 14) Did the gender of your child have any influence on how far away you feel comfortable letting him or her go?

- 15) Did your son or daughter lived in the dorms or are thinking about living in the dorms in college?
- 16) Did the gender of your child have any influence on the decision to live in the dorms?
- 17) How much do you trust your son or daughter?
- 18) Does the gender of your child have any influence on the trust level?
- 19) Do you think the Hmong community's overall attitude has changed towards women pursuing a higher education in the past 15 years?
- 20) Do you foresee any changes in roles of man and women in the distant future?

### **Interview Questions for Students and Former Students**

- 1) What long have you been in the US?
- 2) Are you a first, second, or third generation student?
- 3) Are you the first person in the family to be going off to college?
- 4) What do you think is the value of a college education?
- 5) What are you hoping to get out of college?
- 6) How far away is your college away from home or how far away do you intend to go away for college?
- 7) How much influence did your parents have on the college decision on how far away you go?
- 8) Are you living on campus?
- 9) How much influence did your parents have on the decision to live on or off campus?
- 10) What do you think is the role of a Hmong Man?
- 11) What do you think that role has to do with a college education?
- 12) What do you think is the role of a Hmong woman?
- 13) What do you think is that role has to do with a college education?
- 14) What do you think are some of the barriers to education that Hmong men face in today's society?
- 15) What do you think are some of the barriers to education that Hmong women face in today's society?
- 16) Do you think that these barriers differ from what they were 10 years ago and how so?
- 17) In your opinion, is it easier to do school work as a boy or girl?
- 18) Do you think it is easier to succeed in school as a boy or girl?
- 19) What do you think the community see as more important, an education or a cultural abiding Hmong man or woman?
- 20) What do you think is the Hmong community's overall attitude of a women chasing a higher education?
- 21) As a women, do you think it will be hard to find a husband if you are more educated and older than the average marrying age?
- 22) As a man, how would you feel about marrying a wife with possibly a higher education than yourself?
- 23) What do you think is the role of an ideal wife?
- 24) What do you think is the role of an ideal husband?